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U.S. urged to push overthrow of Qaddafi

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WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

A former national security adviser to President Reagan said yesterday that he is urging the administration to give open and covert support to overthrowing the terrorist Libyan regime of Col. Muammar Qaddafi.

Joseph Churba, now president of the conservative Center for International Security here, said Mr. Qaddafi has become a major "destabilizing" force in Latin America in addition to his terrorism in Africa and the Mideast and threats of terrorist acts against the United States.

Among other moves, Mr. Churba told a press conference yesterday, Mr. Qaddafi's oil wealth provided heavy financing for the new airstrip on Grenada, and he has worked actively to subvert governments in the Caribbean and in South America.

"It is clearly time to recognize the Qaddafi regime for what it truly is, a malignancy in the international body politic, which should be excised at the source before its spread becomes uncontrollable," Mr. Churba said.

While at it, Mr. Churba suggested it would be well to "excise" other surrogate regimes of the Soviets.

A reporter asked Mr. Churba if he proposed assassinating Mr. Qaddafi.

"We ask for his removal," Mr. Churba said.

"By what means?

"Covert and overt means."

"Not military action?"

"I'm not calling for direct military action," Mr. Churba said. "I think the job is largely that of the Libyan people themselves. I'm talking about intelligence services. I'm talking about providing the funds for diplomatic and political know-how... to alternative leaders and generally guiding them without public fanfare."

"If it develops that the most effective covert means of doing away with this government is to engineer his assassination, do you think that would be necessary?" Mr. Churba was asked.

"I think that that should definitely be considered and is one of the many alternatives available to us," he said.

At another point, Mr. Churba was asked if he were speaking about possible CIA assassination.

"No, I am not," he said. "I am talking about the primary responsibility being the people, the local people that are under the subject's rule. We should do everything in our power to help them liberate their own countries."

"Would the American people accept such adventurism?"

"I don't think this is adventurism," he said. "I believe the American people have had their fill of Qaddafi, Khomeini and Castro."

All should be replaced to get at the source of Soviet-inspired terrorism and expansionism, he said.

Mr. Churba resigned as senior adviser to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency last year. He served earlier as senior Air Force intelligence adviser on the Middle East and as adviser to Mr. Reagan during his presidential campaign.

"This was seriously talked about in the period during the campaign and the transition — dismantlement of the Soviet empire, by which we meant Cuba, Libya and other countries which we thought were primary Soviet surrogates," he said.

"Regrettably, the administration did not adopt the thinking of the original defense advisory team that Reagan put together," Mr. Churba said.

"This policy shift was the work of long-time bureaucrats, civil servants who have been making book on Libya for the last 20 to 25 years and don't want to upset the situation as it is," Mr. Churba said. He added:

"In 1971, I think that was the year, a group of Libyan officers informed the American Embassy they were going to overthrow Qaddafi and wanted support, and the instructions were to get all the information possible, after which the information was handed over to Qaddafi and these men were eliminated.

"So we had opportunities in Libya, but we deliberately gave them up as we made a decision to live with Qaddafi and Libya indefinitely," Mr. Churba said.

Mr. Churba, then senior Air Force adviser on the Mideast, said he does not think the incident has ever been made public but believes "it's an open secret among analysts."

What was the Americans' motive?

"They didn't want to destabilize Libya."